PALGO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION RESEARCH (PJER)

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REVIEWERS GUIDE

PART A: ***Editorial Office Only***

SECTION I

Manuscript Title: Manhood Initiation in Ozuzu Clan, Rivers State: A Semiotic Analysis of Traditional Songs

Reviewer's Assessment

OVERALL RATINGS

Criteria	Rating	Comment
Originality	2 (Good)	Addresses an under-documented cultural practice
Contribution to the Field	2 (Good)	Fills gap in Nigerian ethnomusicology
Technical Quality	3 (Fair)	Methodology needs strengthening
Clarity of Presentation	3 (Fair)	Some sections require restructuring
Depth of Research	2 (Good)	Rich qualitative data, limited analytical depth

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GENERAL COMMENTS

This manuscript presents a valuable ethnographic study of a relatively undocumented cultural practice. The authors demonstrate genuine engagement with the Ozuzu clan's initiation traditions and have collected rich qualitative data. The study makes a meaningful contribution to preserving endangered oral traditions and adds to the scholarly understanding of African rites of passage. However, the manuscript would benefit from methodological clarification, enhanced analytical depth, and improved structural organization. With moderate revisions, this work has strong potential for publication.

DETAILED SECTION-BY-SECTION REVIEW

1. ABSTRACT

Strengths:

- Clearly states the research focus and cultural context
- Appropriately mentions theoretical frameworks
- Summarizes key findings effectively

Areas for Improvement:

- The abstract is slightly lengthy (consider reducing to 250-300 words)

- → "The study employs thematic and semiotic analyses" – Consider: "The study employs thematic and semiotic analysis"
- The phrase "sustenance of the initiation culture" sounds awkward → Suggest: "continuation" or "preservation"
- Consider adding specific research design (ethnographic qualitative study) earlier in the abstract

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2. INTRODUCTION

Strengths:

- Establishes cultural significance effectively
- Good use of relevant literature (Finnegan, Okpewho, Barber)
- Clearly identifies the research gap

Areas for Improvement:

Grammatical/Stylistic Corrections:

→ "In the Ozuzu clan of Etche in Rivers State" – Consider: "In the Ozuzu clan of Etche **Local Government Area,** Rivers State" (for consistency with later usage)

→ "Songs in African cultures are not merely artistic expressions; they are vehicles" – Excellent sentence, no change needed

→ "Thus, in the Ozuzu clan, the songs used during initiation ceremonies are more than cultural artifacts" – Consider removing "Thus" for better flow

→ "also known as *Mba-Asa*" – Good use of italics for indigenous terms

Content Suggestions:

- The introduction would benefit from a brief overview of the Ozuzu clan's demographic and geographic context
- Consider adding a sentence about the current state of these practices (are they thriving, declining, transforming?)

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3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Strengths:

- Clearly articulates the threat to oral traditions
- Good integration of Finnegan (2012) and Eze (2021)

Areas for Improvement:

Grammatical Corrections:

→ "cultural erosion tin today's globalised world" – **ERROR:** Change "tin" to "**in**"

→ "Finnegan's position underscores the need for African communities to retain their cultures and traditions because not to do so will threaten identity formation" – This sentence is grammatically awkward. Suggest: "Finnegan's position underscores that failure to retain cultures and traditions threatens identity formation"

→ "Also, in his study about manhood initiation in the Nama and Xhosa traditions in South Africa,, Eze (2021)" – **ERROR:** Remove double comma ",,"

→ "Finnegan and Eze's studies dwelt mainly on African communities outside Nigeria" – Consider: "**focused** on" instead of "dwelt mainly on"

→ "there is dearth of research" – Missing article: "there is **a** dearth of research"

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4. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Strengths:

- Well-aligned objectives and research questions
- Clear and achievable research aims

Minor Suggestion:

- Objectives 2 and 3 overlap slightly – consider refining to distinguish between communicative roles (objective 2) and cultural value reinforcement (objective 3)

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5. OPERATIONAL CLARIFICATION OF KEYWORDS

Strengths:

- Very helpful for readers unfamiliar with the context
- Clear definitions

Grammatical Correction:

→ "Manhood Initiation: An annual ritual aimed at culturally inducting and grooming boys into men" – Consider: "An annual ritual aimed at culturally inducting boys **into manhood and** grooming **them as** men"

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6. METHODOLOGY

This section requires the most significant revision.

Strengths:

- Mentions triangulation (interviews, observation, social media clips)
- Addresses ethical considerations
- Mentions validation (member-checking)

Critical Areas for Improvement:

Grammatical Corrections:

→ "This study adopted a mixed design approach" – **CONFUSION:** You describe qualitative methods but call it "mixed design." If purely qualitative, state: "This study adopted a **qualitative ethnographic** approach"

→ "The participant observation and survey designs were used" – **INCONSISTENCY:** Later you mention interviews, not surveys. Clarify: "**Participant observation and in-depth interviews** were used"

→ "interviews were conducted on 15 persons" – Should be: "interviews were conducted **with** 15 persons"

→ "Participant observation and interview guides which were used as instruments" – Awkward construction. Suggest: "Participant observation protocols and interview guides served as research instruments"

→ "Data collected from the field were mainly texts" – This needs clarification. Audio recordings transcribed to text? Field notes? Be specific.

Content Gaps:

1. **Sampling:** You mention "purposive" sampling but don't explain the selection criteria clearly. What made these 15 participants ideal?
2. **Data Collection Timeline:** When was fieldwork conducted? Over what period?
3. **Social Media Clips:** You mention this data source but don't explain how it was analyzed or integrated
4. **Saturation:** Did you reach data saturation? How did you determine 15 interviews were sufficient?
5. **Thematic Analysis:** Briefly describe the process (coding, theme identification, validation)
6. **Semiotic Analysis:** This is mentioned in the abstract but not explained in methodology. How was semiotic analysis operationalized?

Recommendation: Expand this section significantly to meet scholarly standards for qualitative research.

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7. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Strengths:

- Rich qualitative data from participants
- Good use of direct quotes
- Thematic organization is logical
- Multiple exemplars strengthen findings

Areas for Improvement:

Grammatical Corrections:

→ Table headers: "Participants Responses" – Should be: "Participants' Responses" or "Participant Responses"

→ "The participants are generally of the view" – Consider: "Participants **consistently expressed the view**"

→ "The participants believe in the age-long meanings" – Awkward phrasing. Suggest: "Participants **emphasized the enduring significance**"

→ In Exemplar 1: "He who is born should born another" – This translation is grammatically incorrect. Should be: "He who **was** born should **give birth to** another" or "He who **received life** should **pass it on**"

→ "These symbolic expressions make communication engaging" – This appears suddenly without context. Consider: "These symbolic expressions **enhance the pedagogical effectiveness of the songs**"

Content Suggestions:

1. **Missing Analysis:** While you present participant interpretations, you don't analyze patterns across responses or connect findings to theoretical frameworks. Each exemplar section should include **your analytical interpretation**, not just participant quotes.
2. **Semiotic Analysis:** The title promises semiotic analysis, but the presentation is mostly descriptive. Apply Barthes' framework more explicitly:
    - Identify denotative vs. connotative meanings
    - Discuss signifier-signified relationships
    - Explain mythological dimensions
3. **Call-and-Response Section:** You present only ONE example. Include 2-3 more to demonstrate patterns.
4. **Triangulation:** You collected observation data and social media clips but don't present or integrate them. Where is this data?

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8. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Strengths:

- Clear summary of key findings
- Good integration with existing literature (Olatunji, Barber, Gee)
- Connects findings to theoretical frameworks

Areas for Improvement:

Grammatical Corrections:

→ "This is because they serve a communicative role towards transmitting" – Remove "towards": "they serve a communicative role **in** transmitting"

→ "socializing agents for shaping culture using imbued semiotic texts" – Awkward. Suggest: "socializing agents that shape cultural identity through semiotically rich texts"

→ "didactic function of the songs that exemplified the study" – Should be: "didactic function of the songs **examined in** the study"

→ "The findings of the study also portrayed elements of communal bonding" – Better: "The findings also **revealed** elements"

→ "Such interaction confirms the observation of Gee (2014) that discourse patterns reinforce social roles" – Good synthesis

→ "The above supports the opinion of Barber" – Replace "The above" with specific reference: "**These findings** support Barber's assertion"

Content Suggestions:

- The four numbered findings at the end are excellent but should be **expanded** with brief supporting evidence
- Consider organizing this section into subsections: (1) Thematic Findings, (2) Semiotic Findings, (3) Theoretical Implications

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9. DISCUSSION

Critical Issue: THIS SECTION IS MISSING

A proper manuscript requires a separate **Discussion** section that:

- Interprets findings in depth
- Compares with existing literature systematically
- Addresses implications
- Discusses limitations
- Explains theoretical contributions

Currently, your "Results and Findings" section combines results and brief discussion. For publication, these should be separated.

Recommendation: Create a robust Discussion section (800-1200 words) that:

1. Synthesizes findings thematically
2. Compares findings with similar studies (Olatunji, Nketia, Okonkwo)
3. Discusses implications for cultural preservation policy
4. Acknowledges study limitations
5. Suggests future research directions

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10. CONCLUSION

Strengths:

- Concise summary of key contributions
- Emphasizes practical and scholarly value

Areas for Improvement:

Grammatical Corrections:

→ "initiation songs in Ozuzu clan are not mere ritualistic embellishments" – Good phrasing

→ "facilitate the transformation of boys into socially responsible men" – Excellent

→ "filling a significant gap in Nigeria's ethno-musicology" – Consider: "Nigerian ethnomusicology" (more standard phrasing)

→ "an important exercise which has become an endangered part" – Awkward. Suggest: "an urgent necessity **given the endangered status of** the peoples' oral tradition"

→ "This will be a strategy for sustaining" – Should be: "**Such documentation serves as** a strategy"

Content Suggestion:

- The conclusion could be slightly expanded (1-2 sentences) to emphasize the broader implications for African oral tradition scholarship

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11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengths:

- Practical and actionable
- Addresses multiple stakeholders (community, researchers, policymakers)

Grammatical Corrections:

→ "the Ozuzu manhood initiation rites should be sustained in the interest of the values that it promotes" – Subject-verb disagreement. Change: "**rites** should be sustained **in light of** the values **they promote**"

→ All recommendations are clear and appropriate

Content Suggestion:

- Consider adding a recommendation about **integrating youth perspectives** – How can younger generations be engaged more actively?
- Recommendation about **collaboration with educational institutions** for cultural education

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12. REFERENCES

Strengths:

- Comprehensive and relevant sources
- Proper citation of foundational scholars (Finnegan, Barber, Barthes, Turner)
- Mix of classic and recent sources

Areas for Improvement:

Formatting Issues:

1. **Eze (2015)** citation: → "Journal of African Cultural Studies, 27(3),325-338" – Missing space after comma: "27(3)**, **325-338" → The DOI looks incomplete: "https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jacs.2015.27.3.325" – **Is this a placeholder?** Verify actual DOI.
2. **Eze (2021):** This source is cited multiple times in text but **NOT in the reference list**. **ADD THIS REFERENCE.**

Content Suggestion:

- Consider adding 2-3 more recent sources (2020-2024) on African oral traditions and cultural preservation to show engagement with current scholarship

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DECISION & RECOMMENDATIONS

DECISION: MAJOR REVISIONS REQUIRED

This manuscript presents valuable research on an under-documented cultural practice and makes a meaningful contribution to African oral tradition studies. However, several substantive issues must be addressed before publication:

MANDATORY REVISIONS:

1. **Expand Methodology Section** (Critical)
    - Clarify research design terminology
    - Explain semiotic analysis procedures
    - Describe data analysis process in detail
    - Justify sample size and selection
2. **Add Discussion Section** (Critical)
    - Separate from Results
    - Provide deeper theoretical engagement
    - Discuss limitations explicitly
    - Compare findings systematically with literature
3. **Complete Semiotic Analysis** (Critical)
    - Apply Barthes' framework explicitly throughout analysis
    - Distinguish denotative/connotative meanings
    - Provide deeper interpretation beyond participant quotes
4. **Correct All Grammatical Errors** (Required)
    - See summary table above
    - Proofread carefully throughout
5. **Fix Reference List** (Required)
    - Add missing Eze (2021) citation
    - Verify Eze (2015) DOI
    - Ensure consistent formatting

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED REVISIONS:

1. Integrate observation data and social media clips into analysis
2. Provide 2-3 additional call-and-response examples
3. Add more recent literature (2020-2024)
4. Include demographic table of participants
5. Add visual elements (photos with permission, song transcriptions, performance structure diagrams)

OPTIONAL ENHANCEMENTS:

1. Consider adding a brief ethnographic vignette to open the manuscript
2. Include appendix with complete song lyrics (translated)
3. Develop a conceptual model showing how songs function communicatively